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THE
Masonic Jennerian
SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL OF GLOUCESTER,
AUGUST 19, 1823,

IN AID OF THE SUBSCRIPTION

FOR

Erecting a Monument in Honour of
DR. JENNER,

BEFORE

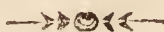
The Provincial Grand Lodges of the Counties of
GLOUCESTER & HEREFORD,

AND A VERY

NUMEROUS AND RESPECTABLE ASSEMBLAGE

OF

THE CRAFT.



BY

Brother the Rev. T. D. FOSBROKE, M.A. F.A.S.

*Author of the History of Gloucestershire, the Encyclopædia of Antiquities,
&c. and P.P.G.C. of the Counties of Gloucester,
Hereford, and Monmouth.*

PUBLISHED, BY REQUEST,

For the Benefit of the Monumental Fund.

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—♦—
1823.



TO

THOMAS CREASER, ESQUIRE, M.D.

OF CHELTENHAM,

AS AN OLD, VALUABLE, AND SINCERE

FRIEND OF THE CELEBRATED SUBJECT,

THIS SERMON

IS INSCRIBED,

IN TOKEN OF THE PERSONAL RESPECT

OF

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THIS Publication ought not to be sent into the world, without a grateful acknowledgment to FREEMASONS, of whom, as a body, the world sees nothing, except in support of laudable and philanthropic objects. Millions now existing have apparently neither the feeling nor the sense to perceive, that they owe their lives to the Vaccine ; but every person thus secured from the Small Pox, above twenty years of age, ought to subscribe at least something. Such an opportunity is now offered by the sale of this little work ; from which the Author and Publishers derive no profit ; and they only make these homely remarks, to aid the receipts of the MONUMENTAL FUND.

PRAYER.*

OH! Thou, who art what Thou art; the God of our Holy Bible, Alohim, Jehovah of Sabaoth, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, God infinite and eternal; Thou to whom Nature has no mystery, Time has no futurity; Thou, who by the spirit and the life of Thy Holy Word, the going forth of Wisdom and Omnipotence, hast promised to form a spiritual seed of Abraham, like the stars of Heaven, and more than the dust of the earth for number; Thou who hast said to the lowly children of Adam, “Thou shalt be my people, and I will be thy Alohim:” Pray we, as adopted Children of thy Grace, that thou wouldst fix all our thoughts, and place all our confidence upon that immortal principle within us, which is beyond the power of the grave—Pray we, that Thou wouldst purify us into holiness in the life which now is, and elevate us into glory, in that which is to come; and as, in our human weakness, we know not what to ask, pray we further, in the perfect wisdom of that blessed co-eternal Being, who took upon him the form of Man:

Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven: Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever.

* The Author has to apologize for having written and given this original Prayer, instead of one from the Liturgy.

SERMON.

JOB, chap. xxviii. v. 22, 23.

Destruction and Death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears: God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.

“LET us take (says a powerful Divine,) some quiet sober moments of life, and add together the two ideas of Pride and of Man. Let us add them, if we can, without a smile; behold him, a creature of a span high, strutting in infinite space, with his shallow depth, his cowardly courage, and his impotent strength: he darts disdain from his eyes in all the grandeur of littleness. Perched on a small speck of the universe, every wind of heaven strikes into his blood the chillness of death. His soul fleets from his body like melody from the musical string; day and night, like dust on the wheel, he is rolled along the heavens, through a road of worlds, while all the systems and creations of God are flaming above and beneath. He is an atom of atoms.”*

* Sermons by the Rev. Sidney Smith.

These remarks are just; but nevertheless this worm will speak marvellous things against the God of Gods; affect the eccentricity of the comet which shakes from his horrid hair pestilence and war, and darken the counsels of the Most High by words without knowledge. In the language of a Behemoth of Infidelity,* he will say—"Why does the God of all good suffer evil to exist? Either God would remove evil out of this world, and cannot; or he can, and will not; or he has neither the power or will; or, lastly, he has both the power and will. If he has the will and not the power, this shows weakness, which is contrary to the nature of God; if he has the power, and not the will, it is malignity, and this is no less contrary to his nature; if he is neither able nor willing, it is both weakness and malignity; if he be both able and willing, which alone is consistent with the nature of God, how comes it that there is evil in the world?"

This is the mighty argument which is brought forward as a battering ram, against our fenced city; but a simple exhibition of its flimsy materials, will show that it has not the strength of a bull-rush. God's permission of evil to continue in the world, is no proof of weakness, because the power which is able to create can most certainly alter, if it thinks proper. But God might have so created the world, that evil should have no existence at all. This is evident:

* Voltaire, who, by the way, is indebted to the ancient opponents of Christianity for many, if not all, of his ideas.—See *Minucius Felix*, &c.

but arguments drawn from power can never be conclusive, since there may be satisfactory reasons, why such power is not deemed fit to be exercised ; and to make God compelled to exert his power, in order to demonstrate his benevolence, is to detract from his other attribute of free-will, and make him biassed by a necessity superior to himself, which is manifestly absurd. God cannot, because he will not, is the only way of stating the question, without infringing his other attributes ; and if good reasons may be assigned, why the Creator has not chosen to make man and the world as perfect as himself, I think that we ought not to arraign the wisdom of the Divine Dispensation ; for in the discussion of things there are two modes of considering them ; one founded upon the principle, the other upon the consequences. Thus, if man be destined to future life, there must be death ; and if death, disease. But pain is in the abstract absurd, since a man might say, to what purpose is he tortured, as he might as well either recover from his disease, or die, without feeling it at all. But when it is considered, that, because all living beings are liable to expose themselves to the shock of many different objects, which might destroy their existence, nature has given them the faculty of feeling ; and that, by means of this faculty, every thing hurtful to their being brings with it a sensation of evil and misery, and every thing favourable to it a sensation of pleasure and well-doing, the existence of pain is sufficiently reasonable.

No doubt, if the Bible included a system of Natural Philosophy, we should no longer see through a glass darkly ; but the reason why it does not, probably is, because, if it did, we could not possibly understand it in the present state of our faculties. We are authorized to form this hypothesis, by the simple circumstance of our utter inability to make the Divine Being a subject of vision, which faculty may be essential to our comprehension of the grand machinery of his Providence. If, therefore, the existence of physical evil, in a sense limited to our own modes of being, be admitted as incontrovertible, we still possess a faculty by which we palliate that evil. This faculty is Reason, the image of God in Man. In all points, which do not imply a knowledge of the essence of Deity, it is only ignorance to place Reason and Revelation in a state of variance ; for, in fact, what Reason directs as wise and good, Revelation commands as an indispensable duty. And it is fit that it should do so ; for ignorance degrades, and does not and cannot suitably worship and glorify the Creator. If it did, mankind of course would never have improved, nor idolatry have been superseded, nor Revelation have been communicated for the aid of Reason.

Further, that civilization is a pure result of reason, and that talents and knowledge are effectual instruments of civilization, cannot be disputed. So kind, indeed, is Providence, that even the elements are subjected to the command of mind. The deadly fire of Heaven is paralyzed by another rod of Moses,

the simple steel conductor ; and the raging ocean, by the art of navigation, becomes a wild beast domesticated. But let not man take to himself the glory. The humblest man of mere handicraft enjoys his skill only by a divine dispensation. Moses said unto the children of Israel, “ See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur ; and he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in all manner of workmanship ; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver and brass ; and he hath put in his heart that he may teach.” *

Now, if God had put it into the heart of an artificer, that he might teach, surely he has also put it in the hearts of philanthropists to contrive means for preventing unnecessary waste of life. When Jonah begged, in his human ignorance, in his human soreness of injury, in his human bitterness of soul, that Nineveh might be overthrown in forty days, the Almighty rebuked him in the following sublime form. He prepared a gourd for the support of the prophet, and sent a worm, when the morning rose the next day, so that it withered. “ Now,” said Jonah, “ it is better for me to die than to live ;” but God said to Jonah, “ Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd ?” And he said, “ I do well to be angry.” “ Then,” said the Lord, “ thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither made it grow, which came up in a night and

* Exodus xxxv. 30.

perished in a night ; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand.”

Thus far have I gone, according to the philosophy of the Holy Bible, the very and actual thinking of the Spirit of God ; and do I err, in presuming that our deceased friend was a blessed instrument of Providence—one, whom the Lord had appointed to cause the eyes of the blind to see, out of obscurity and out of darkness. I think that I do not err. He was a man of high abstracted views. There is a pestilence—I need not name it—we know the monster well. I can imagine, that his lofty mind, in the language of the prophet, mounted on the wings of an eagle to the throne of the Almighty, and solicited the knowledge of his Divine pleasure. I can conceive, that he made his humble petition in the harrowing effusions of Holy Writ. “ Have pity upon them, have pity upon them, oh ! my God. Their’s is a cry out of the belly of the grave ; we hear the voice under our feet as we walk. It is the cry of those whose souls are fainting in them, to whom the inspiring beauty of the cheerful day is even as the shadow of death, whose portion is accursed in the earth. Affliction and misery have made them drunk with wormwood and gall. In the horrors of their danger they exclaim, “ The Lord is as an enemy. We beseech thee, oh Lord ! we beseech thee, let us not perish ! ” I will borrow the language of holy Job, to conceive the answer, which the Almighty in his mercy may have made to

this imploring petition : “ Son of Man, there is a path, which no fowl knoweth, and the vulture’s eye hath not seen it. Thou shalt discover deep things out of darkness, and bring out to light the shadow of death.”

But there are human defects in his grand annunciation. Man, who art thou that expectest perfection in any thing human? Is the compass always true to the North, and has it no variations? The error lies not in the Author, but in the subject. The language of nature abounds with anomalies; and the grammars and dictionaries, into which we would look to find them out, are incomplete. It was a maxim of ancient learning, that diseases are infinite, and that, of infinities, there can be no certain and infallible knowledge.* Why, then, should we reason with unprofitable talk? Much, very much has been done: “destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof;” and are the consolations of God small with us? Do the dogs of envy still continue to bark? Does the foam of the hydrophobia still ooze from their distorted nostrils? He regards them not. The music of his life has ceased to sound, and can no longer be interrupted by discords. But there is a voice which speaketh in silence. It is the fervid affection of numerous and sincere friends—the voice that talketh to the heart.

Indeed, it is bitterness of soul to see an old friend only in a family portrait; to see the door open, and

* *Conservare vitam non est medici, quum infiniti morbi sunt, et infinitorum nulla sit ars. Nichols’s Progresses of Q. Elizabeth, i. 241. New Edit.*

he enters not ; to go to his house, and wander about the rooms, and be haunted only with his apparition in the mind's eye ; to recall his figure, his air and manners ; to remember his conversation under a sunshine of soul ; to recollect all his benevolent looks and kind expressions ; to feel that he was happy and we were happy : such have been my sad feelings, and I am satisfied, that they have been the feelings also of many around me. Truly he was deserving of them. His mind was a munificent benefaction to the public. His house and his heart belonged to his friends. He might have spread his pinions upon the favouring gales of popularity, and built his ærie in the lofty cliffs of ambition ; but he preferred the amiable tranquillity of the retired songsters of the grove, and made his nest with the dove. He delighted in Home ; and Home among persons of such habits as his were, is commonly a temple of virtue, sentiment, and reason. Luxuries and frivolities were not to him Lares and Penates, indispensable household gods, to whom an idolatrous service is daily paid. He sought, and he obtained, a muscular and a healthy happiness.

Thus he lived to see length of days. Is there under Heaven a more impressive sight, considered in a solemn and affecting view, than to behold a benevolent and wise old man, seated by his fire-side ? In his own small circle, he represents, in a remote degree, the Almighty Father of us all. Long experience has made him wise ; and from his lips drop the

oracles of wisdom, more valuable than rubies or precious stones. Sole survivor of father, mother, wife, brothers, sisters, now spirits made perfect, he sat, like a Patriarch of Scripture on a family throne, consanguinity and duty pouring their offerings of affection into his cup. Surely there is blessedness in scenes like these. Delight suffuses the eye, and manhood, sportive and playful, becomes again a child. All the paltry troubles of dirty interest are forgotten, and cares are driven off, like intruding flies. The finest feelings of holy nature lay the soul upon a bed of roses, and lull it to sleep with hymns of tenderness.

He was a Philosopher. He had a soul of indefinite expansion : his objects were great, and he was enthusiastically devoted to them. They were to him food and raiment, thought and conversation, labour and amusement, sleep and respiration ; and it is only from characters like these that the world has ever derived any original improvement. He searched for unknown trees of knowledge ; and if another serpent professed to point them out to him, it was the symbolic serpent of the healing art, not that which brought into the world misery and death.

He was a Patron. What is the unbefriended man of genius, but a wanderer without a home, who sits down by the waters and weeps ? He came with all the good Samaritan in his soul, held out the right hand of friendship to the sufferer, and took down his harp from the willow.

View him as a Man of Science : his knowledge was a precious metal, which would bear the crucible.

View him, as a Man of Taste : he learned *what ought to be* from the best patterns of *what is* ; and he converted the sublimities and beauties of nature into affections of the mind. View him in the fullness of his honour : he enjoyed it like a summer evening : he walked out in it ; he inhaled happiness, and he thanked his God. View him as a Man and a Stranger : his eye spoke benevolence through the greeting smile. View him as a Neighbour : it was the recollection of past childhood ; of the sports of companionship : and the days unembittered with care. View him as a Friend : it was the response of sympathy ; the chord vibrating in unison. In short, as a Man, a Relative, a Neighbour, a Friend, a Man of Taste and Science, a Philosopher—I will not foolishly and profanely make a God of him, for I know nothing human and material that can with decency be called so ; but I will say, that according to the benevolence of his character and disposition, if he had had celestial means, he would have wished to have been so ; and that, as he was inevitably human, I can only assimilate him to a fine climate, under whose benign influence human blessings spontaneously grow and abound.—I may be thought to have exaggerated in my statement ; and such an impression is natural, because he never studied attitudes of exhibition. His habits were those of our greatest men, plain and unassuming. Justice to his own high pretensions, did not occupy his thoughts ; and they who went to him, as they would to a drama or a lecture, found not an actor or a pedagogue, but a hospitable, kind-

old friendship for near a quarter of a century
the last friend who partook a meal with
earth! (May 24th 17/1823) I had the last squeeze
hand! Between us was the last of generous
hearted, and polished man. He thought that he *common*
had rendered essential services to mankind, as a phi- *buter*
losopher and a philanthropist; and that, therefore, no *"God bless"*
necessity existed for his constantly appearing in state, *"you"*
to deliver oracles or display intellectual powers.

Such a man he was; and is such a man to be forgotten? Oblivion is the curse of God upon the undeserving. Job says of the wicked, "he shall be no more remembered;" and God says, in Ezekiel, "he shall be no more remembered: I, the Lord, have spoken it." A Heathen historian refers, in a great measure, the cause of the high qualities of the ancient Romans to the custom of honouring departed excellence, because it excites the emulation of the rising, as well as existing generation. It is a sacred principle with our Fraternity, that even the memory of a Brother, to say nothing of such a Brother as this, should not knock at the door of our hearts, and our chilling answer be, "not at home." We know not hard hearts; we know no limits to our duties, but our means. Necessity is a thrifty housewife, who puts us, as it were, in a drawer or a closet, and locks us up: we may stretch our impulses, as we would our limbs, but we have no room. In the fullness of our hearts, and the expansive philanthropy of our institution, we would make a world the pedestal, and place a whole human race upon the summit, as a memorial of this grand Benefactor to our species; and this new human race we would compose of sons of health, and daughters of beauty, who know not disfigurement.

I speak the language of possibility. Does there exist a man in this enlightened country, who would import a barbarian from savage regions (I regret that I must use the word) to *tattoo* his children? Why then should he permit a barbarian at home, to create the risque of chipping their cherub features, as he would stone or wood; of branding them as he would a beast of burden; of advertising the name of a disease upon them, in letters which every one who runs may read? Can any one speak in behalf of unnecessary danger and deformity, unless it be Prejudice, a fiend from the infernal regions, unfortunately naturalized and domiciliated as man.

I must observe the temper due to this holy place, and I seasonably forbear. I must not indulge in the gambols of poetry. Religion is not a Muse, but an Angel. She knows not passion; and imagination she regards only as a pretty interesting child. I merely advocate, what I solemnly believe to be a momentous blessing; and I advocate the memory of that author of it, “with whom I walked in sweet counsel together.” Need I tell you, that day is light, and night is darkness: that God is glorified in the Astronomy of Newton, and the Vaccine of Jenner. The King’s most sacred Majesty, our Patron; our Royal and Noble Brethren, the Senate, the Universities, many of them Brethren also—all, men who are enlightened with every quality which dignifies our nature, have humanly honoured this hierophant of Providence. His grand discovery is no result of wheels and engines—no cold calculation of the library.

It has all the grand character of the ways of Providence, accomplishing great ends by means seemingly feeble and improbable. In the dregs of a loathsome disease, he found a salutary medicine, and a saving angel in a humble quadruped.

I presume to see God in every thing; I conceive it my duty, as his appointed Minister, to think, that in him we live, and move, and have our being; and I venture to hope, that you will revere those who have the honour to be the dispensers of his blessings upon earth. I think, if such has been their high distinction, that the Almighty himself has destined them to immortality; and that we do right, perfectly right, to perform this our present Thanksgiving Service from the Liturgy of Humanity. We are Masons—and that word means men who rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. We are Christians: we are born children of the religion of Benevolence; we have sucked it in with our mother's milk; we have been baptized in humanity at the holy font; we drink it out of the Sacramental cup:—elevate then the marble, animate it, and bid it speak to other times. Though to us, who mourn and miss him, it will be only the cover of a letter, all blank within; it will in ages yet unborn awaken grand combinations of ideas, and feelings of the most exalted patriotism; for it will not be a sepulchral monument, but a splendid trophy of victorious Philanthropy and National Glory.

Brethren, in the name of the immortal deceased—of his family—of his friends—of mankind at large—

and, last and least of all, of my lowly self, the feeble advocate of his honoured name—I cordially thank you; and may the blessing and the peace of God be your holy reward!

One word more for him that is gone. JENNER! thou name only—it is all that now remains of thee—may that name incite others to imitate thee in thy public spirit and thy private virtues; may it urge them to exhibit as thou didst the glory of God for the good of man. Friend of my youth—friend of my manhood—friend of my declining years—friend even of my children—Farewell!—But here let the bell cease to toll—I know that thy Redeemer and my Redeemer liveth; and that the God, who in his goodness has created us, is the same God who in his mercy will save us.

FINIS.

